

My Experience in the Local Churches – Steve Isitt

Originally a letter, 2005

Edited and changed now for fellowship with others

In August of 1970 I came to my first meeting after the saints met a friend of mine during a gospel stroll at Green Lake. Joel Kennon had talked to my friend and gave him a card that said “Oh taste and see that the Lord is good”. Dan then came to my home that day and gave the card to me. He told me with enthusiasm about the people he had met that day, saying, “they say you can actually taste the Lord in their meetings.” I went to the meeting the next day alone.

Immediately, I was impressed with the two brothers greeting people at the door. An older brother with the warmest smile and gentlest manner shook my hand and ushered me in to be with the people I was to spend the next thirty years with. They had just come up from Yorba Linda, CA that summer.

People at that meeting were eating Jesus and smiling and looking back at me constantly. They were quite interested in me, and I had never seen or felt anything like it before. They were tasting the Lord and it was evident. I knew I wasn't like them.

I laughed because it was so unusual and enjoyable at the same time. I still remember certain testimonies in that meeting and their singing, “Let's take the land Oh Christian brothers”. One brother shared that he thought the meaning of life was getting a higher education so he could get the best job - then he found Christ, and the church! Another brother said he thought traveling around the world would be what he wanted in life. While sitting in an airplane in the rain one night at a German airport with rainwater rolling down the glass as he looked outside, he had a sense of the vanity of life. Then he testified, too, of finding Christ, and the church. The third testimony I remember was by a sister who said that she thought the meaning of life was getting married, but after getting married she soon found that she was not satisfied; so, she thought having children would then give her satisfaction in life. That didn't please her either in the deepest part of her being. Then she testified, glowing in the Lord, that she had found Christ and the church, and that this was the meaning of life and God's purpose for man. All the saints were aglow, in fact, with the most heavenly, radiant smiles. I had contacted the church during a revival that had begun in 1969. These people were so released, enjoyable, and real.

I found out after the meeting as they were setting up for a dinner that it had been a wedding meeting for a couple. The couple simply signed papers after the meeting. I couldn't believe it, and people laughed at me, or with me, at my reaction to this and to all that I was witnessing. I was amazed at how the people worked together happily – young, old, little children – everyone was happy, and there was a special presence about them all.

I was invited to dinner for the next day at the Freeman's, and there I was invited to the Kennon's for dinner scheduled for a few days later. I had quite an introduction to Christ, and the church. Four months later I moved into the brothers house with twelve brothers. Morning watch was at 5:30, and the brothers were diligent to attend. I began to go to all the meetings of the church regularly, and a year and a half later migrated, following a conference in Los Angeles on the book of Matthew.

So, from Jan 4, 1971 to August 1972 I was in the church in Seattle. I was married six months after coming into the church to Kristy Hannus, the first one gained by the saints in Seattle, she was a student at UW in her third year. She felt the church had come just for her and really met her need at that critical time in her life. She moved in with Janet and John Begosian, where they held home meetings till the rest of the saints arrived and a meeting hall was secured. Kristy became Roth Williamson's secretary.

That first year many saints were added to the church, including Pat and LeAnn Stocklin, Russ and Carolyn Schull, and Sherman and Diane Robertson. Ray Desimone came in the next year as a student at UW. I saw dear brother Sherman come into his first meeting, and I watched him throughout. He was exactly what you want to see in a new one, he seemed to be receiving every word and was highly impressed with what he had found. He came right into the church. Joel Kennon gave a message that evening on the world. It was an excellent word. In fact, he said something that altered my life and brought me into a deeper spiritual experience, as I began to practice what he said right away. He said we need to “nip in the bud” the thoughts and temptations of the world. What a salvation that was to me as I began to choose life constantly and faithfully, denying the thoughts of ungodliness and worldly lusts. Christ became my life and content for the church, which helped me immensely to endure the hardship of starting a new church life in the Midwest. Another crucial habit I picked up after one year in the church was the morning watch, which was strongly encouraged and practiced by the saints. The first book I enjoyed reading and pray-reading was Psalms. It took nine months to complete. This little song in our first supplement became my reality in my new locality: “To be nourished with Christ, to be built up in life, to be filled with the Lord and be freed from all strife; call His name, pray His word, breath by breath, hour by hour, and the riches of Christ will flow in you in power. Call, pray-read, call, pray-read, breathe and drink, drink and feed, breathe His name, drink the same, and feasting on His word maintain.” These two practices, feeding on the Lord in His word first thing in the morning and nipping in the bud the things of the world, propelled me into the spiritual life and into the reality of Christ and the church.

At the 3-week conference in Los Angeles on the kingdom in Matthew a call went out for migrations. There were four cities that the brothers had in mind before the Lord: Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis. Pat and LeAnn went to Minneapolis and so did Tom and Lois. Sherman and Diane went to Milwaukee, and Kristy and I went to Indianapolis. Others went also from the Northwest, and we joined those migrating from Los Angeles and other places to become the church in that migrated-to city, or to stand as the church in that city. It was a marvelous time. Conferences were held frequently throughout the country to build up the churches. Once in 1972 Brother Lee held a conference in Indianapolis, then encouraged us all to go to Akron. I went. The conferences were always a big springboard for us all to go on in the churches. How happy everybody was! Any conference in Los Angeles was a must, and it was not uncommon for people to quit jobs if they had to, to go. In my seven years in the Midwest I went to other conferences in Cleveland, Milwaukee, Detroit, Toronto, Boston, and Atlanta. In the ‘70’s I visited Minneapolis, St. Louis, and also Dallas (sent there on business).

Consolidation of Churches

In 1974 there was a consolidation of those newer, smaller, and inexperienced churches to places like Chicago. The saints from Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Indianapolis, and St. Louis were encouraged to move to Chicago where there was a larger and more experienced church for their going on. Because of a strong pull and attraction in Seattle, and due to good things that were happening there and because of fellowship they received, some felt they needed to go back there. I myself could not do that. My definite sense within was to stay in the locality I was placed to be one with the saints for the building up of the church there. My strong natural desire was to return to Seattle, and I was encouraged to do so by two elders in Seattle. I knew the difference between my natural desire to go back to be with those saints and my spiritual sense to stay. I had life to stay, and I had peace. I became miserable when I considered going.

There was no law about the consolidation, people were free to go where they chose before the Lord. The Stocklins, the Washingtons, and the Robertsons moved back to the Northwest.

Sherman had become an elder first in Milwaukee, then I believe after a time in Seattle he moved to Bellevue to help with the eldership there where at least he and Roth coordinated for several years.

We continued on in Chicago from 1974 till 1979. Kristy had wanted to go back for five years to be near her mother and sisters. Finally, because of that and the toll it was taking on her and on us, I felt before the Lord to go. And, in fellowship it seemed good to go for her sake. Again, my natural preference was to go, and I wanted to be careful with such a move, but simply was brought to respond to her need. I wasn't so sensitive as she was about the need for family and grandmas and grandpas. I considered the church as my family. Now I see there needs to be a balance, and the capacities and interests of persons involved needs to be considered. In other words, an unhappy wife makes for an unhappy marriage, which affects the church life.

Move to Federal Way

We moved to Federal Way in October 1979, where I was able to get a job right away as a computer programmer with Rainier Bank. Kristy's relatives lived in or near Auburn. She was from Enumclaw originally. We immediately became needed there. She played piano in the meetings, they had no one at that time who could play so were quite glad she arrived. This participation was a help to her. I became involved in children's meetings, as I had been in Chicago and Indianapolis. Another brother and I were responsible for the children's meetings in Indianapolis, and Bill Cady and I and three sisters, Wanda Billheimer was one, were responsible for children's meetings in Federal Way. (I was to later join Jim Bundy in Seattle to help coordinate the children's meetings after the leaders and others left during the time of trouble.)

Bill Cady, Jim Billheimer, Ruben Pizarro and I began to meet with the two brothers responsible for the church in Federal Way, Terry Rosengarten and Greg Parker. Bill Cady, Ruben, and I also met separately to desperately pray for the church and for the elders. Sisters were praying desperately also. I strongly moved us in Federal Way into the habit and practice of corporate morning watch, which I had practiced and learned through my migration and consolidation experience in Indianapolis and Chicago. We needed more hunger for the Lord and a sense of desperation that would compel us to leave the comfort of our beds and to come to the Lord daily for our personal time with the Him, and then we needed to come together corporately, as many that could and were willing. Six months after the morning watch began, the Lord led the church to stop, and move to Seattle or Bellevue. So, Jim and Wanda went to Bellevue, and have contributed well there. Steve and Patty Kelley went to Bellevue and grew in the Lord. John and Karen Meyer were married in Federal Way and moved to Bellevue. I have been amazed at their growth also. Bill and Ruth Cady went to Bellevue and Bill has done very well in the church life. Greg and Jill Parker went to Bellevue. Kristy and I went to Seattle. Terry and Jan Rosengarten went to Denver. Ruben and Darlene Pizarro went to San Antonio. The church in Federal Way was no more.

The Church in Seattle

These moves took place in 1983, and I very much wanted to become involved in the church life in Seattle now. At that time Brother Lee was in the throes of considering a new way in the churches, which was to solidify in his thinking the next year when he presented the new way as the Lord's new move in the recovery. For a few months in 1983-84 prior to the new way I brought five brothers together to care for the gospel. I had been taking in this ministry for years and wanted to preach the gospel in a coordinated way with others. Every Saturday afternoon at 1:00 we dropped whatever we were doing and came together to pray and to go! We went to Green Lake, and we particularly went to the UW campus.

How enjoyable this was! Marty Young, who later became an elder, said of that time, "It was glorious." We spontaneously brought new ones into a home meeting on one occasion and saints were brought into function to care for them. This was a taste and a little bit of what was to be announced by Brother Lee in October 1984 as the new way.

He wanted to see the church life brought more into the homes for the bearing of fruit with new ones and the shepherding of one another in small group meetings for the building up of the Body in love, through prayer, the Word (truth), and the Spirit.

Dave Loch and Haller Lake

We moved in 1986 to the Haller Lake area. We were walking distance from Dave and Valerie Loch's home. They lived two doors down from the original meeting place for the church in Seattle where I had gone to my first meeting. One evening Dave invited me to his home to meet you and your husband and have a little get together in the Lord. I have already related my experience to you of that evening. I do wish we could have continued together on a weekly basis. I could have thrived in such fellowship. As it was, I was on a slow downward trend and many others were struggling also.

I kept record in a diary of spiritual progress and experiences in those days, with the gospel and in dealing with the Lord. At a certain point my recordkeeping stopped. Many saints in Seattle had been dormant since the new way began and eventually many of them moved to Scottsdale. As much as I wanted to go on in the new way, I wasn't going on. We made a move to Lake Forest Park in 1987 and in October 1987 I went to Taipei. Phil and Sherry Neher had been to our home and the brother encouraged me much in the Lord to go.

Taipei

John Little, from the Southeast at that time, stated in a book that his time spent in Taipei was the best experience in his Christian life. I felt the same way. To be transported across oceans to the other side of the world to spend a completely concentrated time with the saints in the recovery was glorious! I didn't want to leave Taipei because of the daily practice of the God-ordained way and the deep registration within of its validity. We could finally focus on gospel preaching, shepherding, teaching the truth, and prophesying in the meetings. The three-week period I was there was packed with valuable experiences and learning.

I want to share with you some particularly memorable times. I was out with my beloved gospel team during a typhoon one evening. Smaller trees were bent completely at 90-degree angles, and the monsoon rains were blowing in our faces to where we had to walk backwards, looking forward over our shoulder enough to progress. That night we had our best experience; we baptized six people throughout the ordeal. We were electrified. The people were impressed that we were out on such a night. The next day streets were flooded up to our waist, and we couldn't make it to our destination. We seemed to be stopped, but used the time right where we were to go into the apartments and preach the gospel. That night a brother overflowed in the big meeting, sharing with the saints our experience and of bringing people to the Lord and baptizing them. The next day we made it to Hall 23 and it was flooded. The dear brothers, Benson Phillips, Paul Hon, Andrew Yu and a couple of other brothers (maybe Jake and Howard Higashi) were visiting there. The electricity was not working and we could only see by candlelight. The brothers were just standing there, observing at first, watching over the situation as some saints were dealing with the flood problems, others were coming back from gospel outings and fellowshiping about needs. The brothers were rejoicing as were others and there was singing in that blessed atmosphere. It reminded me of the Upper Room. It was a rather intimate time, with everyone so

exhausted from travel, climbing stairs, preaching the gospel, and problems caused by the flooding, but they were also uplifted by the presence of the Lord and one another's spirit.

Upon Returning to Seattle

When I got back to Seattle, my family gathered around me to welcome me back and hear about my experience. I had been in a blessed realm and wanted to continue with the new way experience in my locality and to help bring my family and the church into the new way. I didn't realize that this task would not be easy. We have work and family responsibilities and daily concerns and activities that can so easily interfere with making progress. And, the enemy, Satan, is against the establishing of the saints in vital home meeting fellowship. I did not get established in a home meeting upon return to Seattle. My home situation was needing attention, and my son was causing a lot of strife and problem. He was a freshman in high school, and, though we didn't know it at the time, he was on drugs. We didn't find this out till the end of his senior year. My wife left at the end of his freshman year.

Alone

I was alone with my boys, and raised them through their high school years. I was not much in the church life part of that time, but I kept in contact with Marty Young and when I did go, I went to meetings on the Lord's Day morning and to many of the video meetings in the evening, which were shown twice a week for some time. However, I would go 3-4 months without meeting each year over a six-year period.

In 1989 Richard Martin came to live with me for three months. In 1990 Bill Cady came to live with me for two months. In 1992 a family moved into our cottage for a month and into our house also. The mother and daughter were in the cottage and the two boys in the house. We also had a boy from Spokane staying with us. Kids were all over, and I was usually taking care of them all, but it was fine with me, I was glad not to be alone.

I still desired to get into the matters of the new way and never left that hope and desire. It was in me to practice this, and I was fully supportive of the new way and of the church. I simply wasn't getting any traction. I began to have morning watch with Bill Cady by phone, then took another step.

Morning Watch Again

In October of 1992 I called Ray Christianson and asked him to meet for morning watch. He was struggling terribly in his marriage with his wife, a true opposer to the church, and I wanted to bring him into the life-supply in the word and in the ministry first thing in the morning. I needed help, and he needed help. I also contacted Marty Young and three other brothers, Doug Anderson, Howard DeYoung, and Neil Beaton. I wanted to get people around me because I wasn't making progress in the new way and in the church, and was too much alone and isolated. I also had become distracted by the world. I needed to get connected. I was given the key to the meeting hall by Joel Kennon to begin meeting with these brothers.

Each brother had serious problems at home in their marriage. I made a report to Joel about each one, and encouraged him much in the Lord toward them to help. The most pressing need was with Ray, so I wrote first about him, and longest concerning his need.

Virtually every day Ray and I were together by phone or in person over the next four years. I wanted him to tell me everything about his relationship, and he was glad to do it. He knew I cared about him and for his getting through. He had been under the control of his wife for twenty years. She only allowed him one meeting a month and was a torment at home on the subject of the church. I shared with Joel that this had to stop. He fully agreed. Joel or John Brooks began to meet with Ray once a week and I met with Ray daily. We were all on the same page concerning him.

On the one hand, we encouraged Ray to be very supportive of his wife, because she is his wife, and he must love her and care for her. On the other hand, he did not have to be controlled by her. He was being kept from meeting with the saints and was not free to serve the Lord as he greatly desired to do. Although he had a substantial income and was materialistically blessed with home, boat, cabin, etc., his heart was for the Lord and for the church. Through the fellowship and support he received, he began to assert himself and establish a schedule that was reasonable for him. He did so, not without a good deal of resistance though. His wife had to learn to be reasonable, while at the same time be accommodated by her husband.

Communicating With Elders and LSM

Sometimes in the church life we have problems with one another. As Brother Lee said, “offenses are unavoidable”, as close as we are through our frequent gathering. The first time I had problems with elders I had written three tracts for distribution on my own and gave them to the brothers for their consideration to use for the church. There were no gospel tracts available to the saints at that time. After six weeks when I did not hear from the brothers, I pulled the tracts from the elders’ business office box where I had placed them. I was quite frustrated, because I also had not heard from them all the time I had been struggling. After a week I placed the tracts back in the box and was to go another six weeks without hearing from them. Finally I heard from them and they received the tracts for the church. John Brooks then asked me to contact LSM to get their permission to use certain quotes from the ministry that I was using in the tracts. It was to be two years before I heard from LSM, and that came because I confronted Andrew Yu about it when he was in Seattle giving a conference. He humbly admitted that they don’t answer anyone’s request of that sort, but “drop the letter into a box”, and forget about it.

These experiences with the elders and LSM, along with the elders showing no care or concern in the months and years I had been struggling, opened me up to consider the what the reasons were for such insensitivity. I realized that there was much focus and attention on the young people, while others didn’t receive such care. This became a great concern to me because we had lost many people during the new way, confusion was in the air, and there was a focus of attention that was not on the whole Body, but on a certain group.

The Book Matter

In 1996 I had quite a bizarre encounter with two elders that would be impossible to relate adequately here. This, along with what I have mentioned previously, put me in a very concerned state of mind for where we were as the church, and for our real condition and situation. Brother Lee also continuously spoke of his concern for where we were, and he poured out messages to the elders on our basic need: he said things like, “the recovery has come to a standstill, and we can’t go on without the shepherding”. He gave a classic message, *Love Prevails*, saying, “love is the most excellent way. It is the way to be an elder, a co-worker”, a brother and a sister. He also ministered other messages on love, such as are now contained in the book, *A Word of Love*.

In that book, he said some things that touched the heart of God and resonated in the beings of elders and saints everywhere. One portion that serves to enlarge our hearts and our vision follows:

WL - "I am trying my best to help the church to build up the vital groups with such a shepherding spirit full of love and care for others. We need to have this kind of love and go to tell all the dormant ones who think the church condemns them that the church does not condemn anyone. Rather, the church wants to see all the dormant ones come back. If they all would come back I would weep with tears of thanksgiving to the Lord. The Lord can testify for me that I do not condemn anyone. We have no qualification to condemn anyone. Without the Lord's mercy, we would be the same as the dormant ones. Therefore, we must love them. It all depends upon love, as the wise king Solomon said, "Love covers all transgressions" (Pr. 10:12). We love people. We love the opposers, and we love the top rebels. I really mean it. We love them and do not hate them. Who am I? I am not qualified to condemn or to hate. Am I perfect? Even the prophet Isaiah, when he saw the Lord, said, "woe is me, for I am finished / I am a man of unclean lips, / And in the midst of a people of unclean lips I dwell" (Is. 6:5). Who is clean today? If we criticize people and say something bad about them, we are not clean." (p. 32)

Having such a God of love, I became encouraged in 1996 to seek out those who had left the church to find out from them directly their reasons for leaving. I had read in a book about the reasons that others gave for their leaving, but when I went to them, I found an altogether different side to the story. Things began to come together in my heart as to what our problem was in the recovery.

I presented a "book" to the brothers in Anaheim and to Joel and Marty in Seattle. Joel gave a copy to Sherman. Basically, I wanted to address certain matters that I became aware of concerning our history that I felt might be helpful if we reviewed them. I was quite struck about these matters that had never been presented to us publicly in the churches and that had such significant impact on the oneness in the churches. In short, what I meant to be a means of communication unto healing of many relationships in the Body was not received in the spirit I meant for it to be taken, and I was placed in a discipline mode until I could repent. It has been four and a half years now.

Tony Chee received a couple of explanation letters from me, and in an elders' meeting he said to the brothers early on that he felt I just needed to be brought into the fellowship. He, and other brothers, received a letter from me apologizing for upsetting them with the "book". I said that the Lord isn't able to use it among us now, so I lay it aside and desire to just go on in the church. I was not going to press this matter if the brothers did not want to open to meaningful dialogue with me. However, I wasn't allowed to continue in the church life, and I have been caste as an outsider by the elders, some saints being told not to associate with me. Dan Towle, upon reading my little "book", *In the Wake of the New Way*, had recommended to Sherman Robertson, leading elder in Bellevue, that I be set aside. I was shocked. I had originally written to Dan "for fellowship" only to end up in a kind of prison. My letter to Dan, January, 2001, follows:

Letter to Dan Towle

Dear Brother Dan,

"I have written a little book for the sake of fellowship, mainly with leading ones, concerning our past sixteen-year history of the new way. I think this period of time in the Lord's recovery

warrants our careful study of both the benefits and the costs to the church in what was such a highly controversial move among us in those beginning years.

*“I wanted to come to you because I feel it is **safe** to do so. If I am **inaccurate or unfair** in some way, perhaps you are the most qualified one to **catch** me that I could either make an **adjustment or terminate** the proposed fellowship.”*

I went on, *“I hope we can have a **good, thorough, and upright fellowship** over this booklet called In the Wake of the New Way, while remembering the Lord’s prayer ‘that they all may be one’ and the repeated petitions from our brother Lee, not only to heed the trumpet call for the Lord’s new move, but also to respond to the call for the rendering of care to every member for the building up of the Body in love...”*

*I would welcome your phone call or e-mail message at 425- 445-1732 and sisitt@msn.com. I don’t intend for this booklet to be **widespread**; rather, I hope that ones who do receive it could do so in the Lord, with a holy regard and respect given to those who left the recovery, and a godly consideration rendered to those who remain, but who are in need of more significant care.”*

Dan was the second leading one in the recovery to get a booklet. Joel Kennon was the third. There were only six elders or leading ones that were to receive a booklet through me, each by careful and prayerful consideration. There were only six other saints in the recovery who I personally sent or gave the booklet to, again with care. ***My objective was feedback and genuine fellowship over the matters I presented.***

My understanding had been that **all things can be resolved through fellowship**, which is what I wanted the booklet to initiate. I didn’t hear back from Dan. I had also invited Joel in my e-mail cover letter to “press into the Lord” with me on these matters that I wrote about and especially ***concerning former leading ones who were open and desirous of reconciling fellowship.*** I wanted his covering, advice, monitoring, and fellowship. He did not respond either. The booklet was also to build a bridge of communication to the hundreds of dear saints who were no longer meeting in the recovery.

Instead of getting the fellowship I had requested, I was vilified for associating with certain ones who left the recovery. Both Joel Kennon in Seattle and Sherman Robertson in Bellevue were very agitated when they spoke to me separately, and they sharply rebuked me for contacting a certain brother, who was cut off by the churches. Yet, ironically, it was with this brother where I found Christ, which I could not find with any elder. Other former leading ones also expressed love for me and understood my experience. They also had empathy for the elders, and understood their behavior, having conducted themselves similarly at one time.

As a result of the discipline mode I was in, there was no church life for me, and my spirit stirred in my isolation. I then did further study and was amazed at what we have not heard in the church that is an untold very meaningful part of our history. Any brother that has read this material has had a change of heart regarding the so-called rebellion and rebellious ones. In order to get the attention of the brothers concerning the obvious discrepancies in testimony related to the division that occurred among us, I issued more writings, documents, and letters. I was certain the former leaders were not represented according to the Lord’s feeling or based on the facts of the actual history among us.

I wrote to Francis Ball and Dan Towle to encourage them to have fellowship with John Ingalls, Bill Mallon, and Ken Unger and to open their hearts to one another. When they did not take me

seriously, I went onto the internet to share the real story, hoping that then they would take matters seriously. When they did not respond, I took the site down.

Sherman Robertson

In my efforts to address serious concerns to the brothers, I have met a brick wall and have become a marked person. The following is my letter to Sherman Robertson, a leader in Bellevue, who had written two letters to me. It is significant to note that this dear brother has not spent a minute of time with me in a positive way, as was true about Joel Kennon and Seattle elders and is also the case with the other Bellevue elders. None of them know me, yet Sherman, representing them all, still shamelessly issued forth charges against me that were completely false, to say the least, fully misrepresenting the Lord and me. I have written to him twice to help him and to gain him, beginning with the following letter. He did not respond.

January 5, 2005

Dear Sherman,

In your letters you stated that I need to retract things I said on the internet that were not true. I am prepared to do that, of course, if I have misrepresented anyone or anything in any way.

To bear false witness against another person is such a serious matter that it is one of the Ten Commandments God gave to His people in the Old Testament: “thou shalt not bear false witness against your neighbor”.

In my three and a half years in the Bellevue area, I could not establish the fellowship with you and the brothers, as I had desired. Early on I was taken out of ordinary fellowship before I began to meet in the church in Bellevue. I had just come from San Diego where an experienced brother said I was “a boon to the church life” there, referring mainly to my time spent with him and his wife to help them into the vital groups fellowship and way. We together then helped raise up a group meeting that was indeed vital. The brother and sister ordered vital groups books at that time for the bookroom to encourage others into this fellowship. The brother, his wife, and I have been in the recovery for over thirty years and care very much for the recovery. They both thanked me for my help and for my burden, since they had been dormant and without help for many years. They are currently very much involved in the campus work coordination, having saints in their home every week. I rejoiced with the brother when I heard this.

Coming to the Eastside I wanted to become involved in one or two group meetings and in the campus work and be fully in the church life. The only participation in the church life I have achieved has been a morning revival time with a brother where I receive the Word of God and the words of God’s economy through the ministry of Witness Lee, as has been my practice for over three decades. Following the receiving of the words of God’s economy into us, we pray often for the carrying out of God’s economy in the saints, with the elders, in all the churches, and in His move on the earth in different places. I had initiated corporate morning watch in three localities previously, caring for the enjoyment of the riches of Christ in this ministry - for myself, as well as for others, and for the church. In these last two paragraphs I have described for you three very important matters: 1) **That I am for the God-ordained way** and 2) **I am interested in God’s economy** and 3) **I am for the recovery**. In your two letters you claimed that I am not for these things.

I want to now mention and acknowledge the following solemn characterizations and charges at least implied in your two letters concerning me. You had this to say:

- 1) "You don't belong in the Lord's recovery".
- 2) I don't have a "special calling" to be in the Lord's recovery
- 3) I am not willing to "pay the price to be in the Lord's recovery."
- 4) I am "not interested in God's economy" to be carried out by "means of **the God-ordained way**".
- 4) I don't agree with "God's way of carrying out the church life in the Bible, which is **the God-ordained way**".
- 5) I want the recovery to conform to my own "thought and concept".
- 6) I do not "make it in the recovery" because I do not "agree with what the recovery stands for, God's economy carried out through and by **the God-ordained way**".
- 7) I do not feel that the recovery "matches God's direction for me", so I am free to "meet with another group" or "start my own".
- 8) "It is impossible to change an entire group to conform to how you feel".
- 9) "Your statements of just wanting to enjoy the Lord and go on mean nothing to me. You have a HISTORY of damage".
- 10) I am "not right with God or with the Body."
- 11) "You have most certainly sinned against the entire recovery".
- 12) "Your thought about the recovery being wrong is your major problem."
- 13) "As long as you think you are right, you have no light on this matter".
- 14) "Until you get light you have no way with the Lord".
- 15) "Without light, you will never be able to come back to the Lord's recovery."
- 16) "Because you just don't know how to handle this situation".
- 17) "You are completely in the dark."
- 18) "Repentance is a mercy that is granted to us only by the Lord. But repentance only comes when one realizes that he is altogether WRONG."
- 19) "If you feel that there are so many things wrong in the Lord's recovery today, it doesn't make any sense that you would want to come back to a place that is so wrong".
- 20) "**The God-ordained way** is most certainly the way the Lord's recovery is rooted and grounded in and will be taking until the Lord returns. In this matter there is no turning back. Remember, the Lord's recovery is not going to change, NOT FOR YOU, NOT FOR ANYONE".

I acknowledge that these references are on record now concerning me and that the charges and implications are most serious. You, brother Sherman Robertson, elder, have written these words May 3rd and 4th, 2004 in two letters. In addition, in a phone conversation with you on April 11, 2004, you claimed not only that I was "divisive" but also that "we brothers feel you are **the embodiment of the Accuser of the brethren**".

Sherman, I have learned that it is futile to talk to you or hope for any meaningful dialogue with you on matters you feel support these grave condemnations. You have not been open to the Lord or to me for genuine fellowship. This was made plain to me in our first encounter by your stern, inflexible attitude, and this unbecoming deportment has not changed since. Contrary to what you believe and assert, I am not against anything in the recovery but the misrepresentation of others, and your ongoing misrepresentation of me.

In the booklet, In the Wake of the New Way, you thought I was attacking Brother Lee, the ministry, and the new way. I gave you the wrong impression. I had no intention to attack but to fellowship over points that I made. My request for fellowship was denied and I was set aside. I then put the "book" aside and apologized for upsetting the brothers, seeing that there was no climate for discussion. That should have ended the problem with you but later I was told, "*It's your concepts we can't handle, they have to go, and, if you want to go with them, that's up to you.*" **My concepts!** "*The Body will reject what you're thinking between your ears*".

Witness Lee ~ **“When a person speaks negatively about the ministry you should not consider that as an attack. We must give people the liberty to express what they feel and think...To criticize the ministry, to say something bad about the ministry, and even to oppose the ministry should not be considered as the type of attacking that was done by Alexander the coppersmith.”** - Book 4, Elders’ Training, The Practice of the Lord’s Recovery, pp 81-82

Writing ~ You considered it an issue that my thoughts were put into writing. Yet, I stated at the outset that my writing was to be confined for use in **fellowship, mainly with leading ones.** I made an appeal to Dan Towle about my burden, saying, *“I have written a little book for the sake of **fellowship, mainly with leading ones, concerning our past sixteen-year history of the new way. I think this period of time in the Lord’s recovery warrants our careful study of both the benefits and the costs to the church in what was such a highly controversial move among us in those beginning years.**”*

*“I wanted to come to you because I feel it is **safe** to do so. If I am **inaccurate or unfair** in some way, perhaps you are the most qualified one to **catch** me that I could either make an **adjustment or terminate** the proposed fellowship.”*

I went on, *“I hope we can have a **good, thorough, and upright fellowship** over this booklet called In the Wake of the New Way, while remembering the Lord’s prayer ‘that they all may be one’ and the repeated petitions from our brother Lee, not only to heed the trumpet call for the Lord’s new move, but also to respond to the call for the rendering of care to every member for the building up of the Body in love...”*

*I would welcome your phone call or e-mail message at 425-445-1732 and sisitt@msn.com. I don’t intend for this booklet to be **widespread**; rather, I hope that ones who do receive it could do so in the Lord, with a holy regard and respect given to those who left the recovery, and a godly consideration rendered to those who remain, but who are in need of more significant care.”*

My intention was not to attack anyone or anything. Neither did I write something to **promote** division, and I was **not aggressive** to gain a following by distributing material.

Witness Lee ~ “If any believer who is meeting with any of these sectarian divisions would attend the meetings of the local churches, or contact the believers meeting in the local churches, he should not be rejected, as long as he does not **promote** anything divisive. However, anyone who is **aggressive** for and **promotes** the sectarian divisions should be considered divisive and should be rejected after a first and second admonition.” Bk 10

Again, I wasn’t aggressive to promote anything except fellowship.

Internet ~ It wasn’t till much later that I tried to bring the brothers’ attention to meaningful discrepancies in testimony of what happened in the late eighties upheaval. The difference in testimony is so striking that I was convinced of our need to examine our history carefully using all the available information necessary, which I had full access to. The obvious impression I received from my reading of former leading one’s writings is that we have been bearing false witness in the local churches. Does that mean I’m against the recovery? Or, does that mean that I am careful concerning the testimony we bear before God and man? If I said something opposite to what Brother Lee said, does that mean 1) I am attacking him 2) I am not supportive of his ministry 3) I am violating God’s authority? No. It means I think we need to examine ourselves. It does not mean that I think the “recovery is so wrong” that I need to “meet somewhere else”. I

have a strong vision and a good appetite. I am happy to stay right here in this ministry with those who will let me keep the oneness, and the feast with them. I hope you will be one.

Brother Lee once said, “If you don’t think I can make mistakes, you will do damage to me, and you will do damage to yourself”. In the Ephesians Life-study he said, “I have nevertheless made many mistakes; even some big mistakes.” (P. 279) Therefore, it was not that Brother Lee was not capable of making mistakes. He surely was capable.

I felt it was critical for us to address the discrepancies I found in reports, so I encouraged Dan Towle and Francis Ball to have contact with John Ingalls, Bill Mallon and Ken Unger in the Anaheim area. *There was no response to my appeal from Dan or Francis, though the latter three brothers were quite favorable for steps to be taken unto reconciliation, as brothers.*

Both the idea and I were rejected, even as we were headed toward the courtroom to deal with what I determined was a comparatively small matter of defamation *against us*.

The brothers had not been moved by my *direct* appeal to them for fellowship, but since there was an atmosphere in the church about dealing with the matter of defamation, I took the opportunity and the risk to go onto the internet. Dealing with defamation of character and misrepresentation was on the minds of the brothers, and it was on my mind also. The brothers made their appeals to Harvest House and the authors in the same way I made my appeal to the brothers. They did not get the response they wanted, that is, to meet and reason together, as brothers in Christ, over defamatory portions of a book. And, I did not get cooperation from the brothers to meet and reason together to consider defamatory portions in our writings. The brothers made several attempts with Harvest House; I made several attempts with the brothers to meet and to reason together. Their proposal was rejected by HH, and so were they themselves rejected. My proposal to the brothers was rejected, and so did the brothers reject me. Harvest House initiated taking matters into the legal realm by hiring an attorney. The brothers had taken my matter into the “legal” realm, restricting me from normal church relationship. The brothers also matched HH in getting legal representation, and they filed a lawsuit to deal with defamation against the recovery; I decided to go onto the internet to bring our own possible defamation matter to a head before God, current and former local church members, and the Christian public. The HH president was not moved by the brothers’ decision to litigate. The brothers were not moved by me or by my material on the internet. Since our leaders had no interest to respond to me on this important matter, I stopped and closed the website. Was I aggressive for and promoting divisions? No. I was making an appeal to the brothers, based on my sober study, to consider the defamation of character in our own writings.

My problem is not that I am against the recovery, but that I am for it to the extent of wanting us to consider any misrepresentations of God and man among us. My desire was to present substantial information for fellowship. You refute me before you know the facts. You judge me severely before you read the material. You will not even have fellowship with me in a thoughtful, careful way on the matters.

Conclusion ~ In conclusion, you have given me no liberty whatsoever to express myself. My writing initially was confined to a few brothers (6) and a few saints (6) for their input and fellowship and a big case resulted. Brother Lee spoke of the elders’ tendency to build “*a small issue into a major case in the church like a small hill becoming a great mountain.*” (Book 11, p. 31) I feel this is exactly what has been done with me, beginning with Dan Towle and spreading to you and to Joel. My little “book” was primarily meant to be a tool to help build a bridge of communication to those who were lost among us.

Instead, it became a *tool* to convict me of wrongs against God's government, and separate me from the church. The isolation mode I came into set the stage for committing further "offenses" in the eyes of leaders and to separate me further from them and from the saints to the point that it would nearly be impossible for me to be restored from what I'm told.

You, Sherman, have indeed placed yourself in quite a position before God. Without reading the writings, you still speak. Without knowing me, personally, you still condemn. I feel that you assume much and that you imagine much, due to a lack of interest in the subject and in me. Your time spent on the subject is about as much as your time spent on me, which has been no time at all. With this fact in mind, how can I respect you and what you say regarding me, when you have no respect for me and the matters I presented *for fellowship*?

Steve Isitt 9-12-04 (date written)

I hope you will read on my current website that I strongly promote the God-ordained way revealed in the Bible. I wish that every believer everywhere on the entire earth could meet in the homes under this ministry and care for one another and new ones for the practical building up of the Body in love.

I would never have developed this website if I had been brought back into fellowship. I *would have been* in the church life, with much interest in the 3-strong cord fellowship and the vital groups. I made a trip to Austin in '99 and prayed and fellowshiped with Gary Evans and spent four hours with Mike Lynch on a Saturday morning. I asked to meet with the couple most involved. I stayed in the home of an elder, Doug Stovall, and he got me in contact with that very couple, Bill and Linda Dieball, who had me to dinner. They gave me their testimony and showed me pictures of the 23 brothers around the table in their home. It was quite a time. I was in a young people's meeting with Bill and a prayer meeting with Doug and the adults in Mike's home. I talked with full-timers on Saturday morning and heard testimonies of "the open heart" and "open home" being the key to gaining new ones, as they themselves were gained as students in Austin. I saw the simplicity and the oneness in Austin and came back desiring to be a part of this in Seattle.

I hope you read the writings that you condemn, and read my positive website too, spend time with those who know me, and visit me to pray and fellowship in a spirit of love. After making such an effort to understand me and what I have written and why, I think you will have a change of mind about the subject of "HISTORY of damage" in the recovery, and begin also to consider your own against me.

www.twoturmoil.com/forum [The more positive website referred to is down, temporarily]

Steve Isitt

While I remain in this "prison" experience, I still receive all the saints and have fellowship with a few who receive me and who would like to see a change in the heart of the brothers.

Praise the Lord! As long as my spirit can still rejoice, I feel blessed to be persecuted for righteousness sake, for that is what is taking place. Again I say, praise the Lord! All things can work together for good, for the Lord's purpose and glory! I hope we can all be opened more to Him.